

Suggested Mercury Investigation Checklist for Experienced Investigators

Pre-visit:

- Ask the contact person to **stabilize** the room by closing windows and doors, stopping fans, blocking cold air return registers and allowing the room to reach normal room temperature before your visit. This takes at least a few hours.

On-scene:

- **Before entering** the building, put on shoe covers, start the Lumex mercury vapor analyzer, run an operating test of the machine, and then start sampling as you first enter the structure. If the readings exceed 50,000 ng/m³ (50ug/m³) evacuate the home and do not enter it without personal protective equipment. If the outdoor temperature is much colder than indoors, do the initial test immediately inside the building. The machine has a zero-mercury filter, so start-up in a contaminated atmosphere is not a concern.
- Two-person investigation works best: one to operate the analyzer and one to **record** the readings. Enlist the resident if necessary. Use an **investigation form** that allows you to draw the affected areas on a map and to list sample locations and readings.
- **Mark hot spots** with pieces of tape to help those cleaning up know where to direct their actions.
- If the initial readings in the breathing zone are between 20,000 and 50,000 ng/m³ (20 to 50 ug/m³) consider asking everyone to **leave the building and open all easily opened doors and windows** to ventilate and lower mercury vapor levels.
- When sampling, take readings at both the **floor level** (inches above) and **breathing zone** level (3 to 4 feet off the floor) in every potentially affected room. It's important to test doorways, heavy traffic areas like hallways and the tops and bottoms of staircases for tracked mercury.

- ❑ **Always check** children's bedrooms, beds and cribs, play areas and toys.
- ❑ **Always check** near moldings, floor seams and grout lines, drawer fronts and insides, drains, plastic bags, washing machines, dryers, vacuum cleaners (whether they have been used on the contaminated areas or not) and trash receptacles.
- ❑ Bag suspected items such as clothing, jewelry, shoes and let headspace develop in the bag for an hour or more at room temperature or warmer. **Discard** items if the level exceeds **10,000 ng/m³**. If it is between 1,000 and 10,000 ng/m³, items could be saved by putting them in a non-living area (garage, storage shed, sheltered outdoor place) for several months to allow the mercury to vaporize before retesting.
- ❑ **Consider checking** vehicles where spills or track out might have occurred.
- ❑ Tell the resident how to **dispose of contaminated items** like vacuum cleaners and area rugs. Ask if they would like to dispose of any additional mercury bearing items.
- ❑ When you make recommendations **record them** on your investigation sheet and also on a card you can leave with the resident. Give them a way to contact you with additional questions.
- ❑ If appropriate, suggest that exposed people speak to their doctors regarding **biologic testing for mercury**. Urine tests are recommended for chronic exposures; blood tests are recommended for acute exposures.
- ❑ Ask them to **tell their relatives, friends and neighbors** about the spill and to encourage them to make their homes mercury free.
- ❑ If there is a significant amount of free flowing mercury still in a container and you are authorized to package and transport it safely for disposal – **take it with you**.
- ❑ If their trash does not go to an incinerator, they can put contaminated items out with the normal collection. Be sure to recommend that they partially **disassemble** contaminated appliances and furniture so that no one recovers it from the curbside and takes it home to use.
- ❑ If you are able to give them a non-mercury thermometer to replace what they have lost, **do it**.
- ❑ If you have a question or want a second opinion even during an investigation call MDCH at (517) 335-8138 or 1-800- MITOXIC.